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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirtieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 799th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 4 June 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Second periodic report of Spain (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Second periodic report of Spain (continued) (CRC/C/70/Add.9; CRC/C/Q/SPA/2; HRI/CORE/1/Add.2/Rev.2; written replies of the Government of Spain to the questions in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in Spanish only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Spain took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. MARINA HERNANDO (Spain) said that the draft legislation to amend the Civil Code was currently being considered by the Codification Commission of the Ministry of Justice.

3. The CHAIRPERSON asked how long the draft's passage through that stage was expected to take.

4. Mr. CITARELLA asked what corresponding action was being taken by the Government and the Autonomous Communities to raise awareness of the new provisions, which would prohibit corporal punishment, since social attitudes took time to adjust to new laws.

5. Ms. KARP, referring to the problem of child abuse, said that corporal punishment could not be dissociated from the widespread problem of violence, especially in schools.

6. Mr. MARINA HERNANDO (Spain) said that a campaign had been launched to raise awareness of the changes, and had been complemented by training courses for special advisors. The amendment was meant to establish that certain physical acts, even those involving minimum violence, would henceforth be punishable under the Criminal Code. The intention was, in short, to make all deeds of violence sanctionable under the Criminal Code.

7. Ms. KARP observed that it was important to criminalize all deeds, not solely corporal punishment, that could cause physical and mental harm to a child.

8. Mr. MARINA HERNANDO (Spain) said that the Criminal Code's provisions on sexual abuse established that such acts against the freedom and physical integrity of a young person without the latter's consent were punishable by imprisonment from one to three years. Referring to an observation by Mr. Citarella, he said that, in the case of a minor under 13 years of age, proof of consent was irrelevant, such an offence being punishable by up to 10 years in prison; a recent amendment had raised that age from 12 to 13 years. In cases involving a young person aged between 13 and 16 years, the sentence would be from one to two years.

9. Referring to an observation by Ms. Karp, he agreed that the commercialization of sex was an entirely different matter. Under the criminal law, all cases involving the sexual exploitation of minors for gain, including prostitution and pornography, were punishable offences.

10. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) stressed that all sexual acts involving minors under 13 years of age were sanctionable under criminal law.

11. Ms. KHATTAB, referring to a further question by Ms. Karp on the relationship between Supreme Court decisions and the Criminal Code, recalled that the Supreme Court, in a judgement handed down on 12 January 1998, had recognized immunity for persons paying for sexual acts with a young person if the latter had demanded payment.

12. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said that such a ruling could no longer be upheld, all anomalies in the legislation having been removed by the recent amendments to the Criminal Code.

13. Ms. ROBLEDO (Spain) said that, pursuant to constitutional measures introduced in 1978, the Autonomous Communities had been competent, since 2001, in public health matters in their respective areas, the State retaining exclusive competence for minimum standards and relevant legislation. An Inter-territorial Health Council, established pursuant to the General Health Act (14/1986), comprised the 17 Autonomous Communities and the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla; it consisted of a plenary forum, presided by the Minister of Health and Consumer Affairs, as well as commissions and working groups. Meetings were held at least four times a year. Examples of its activities were the approval, in 1992, of a set of minimum criteria to determine the entire strategy of public health, including child care and family planning, and the adoption, in March 2002, of a text on issues related to improving the health of young persons, including advice on sexual and reproductive activity and on problems related to substance abuse.

14. Ms. SÁNCHEZ RUIZ (Spain) said that more consideration was being given to education for peace and non-violence. The general curricula at all levels already addressed ethical and civic values. In addition to the Organization Act governing the educational system, legislation was currently being drafted on quality in education, which stressed, inter alia, that education had a permanent role in making youth aware of society and its values and developing a sense of responsibility.

15. Coordination in education was assisted by means of sectoral meetings attended by councillors of the 17 Autonomous Communities and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Meetings were held as often as required.

16. Mr. CITARELLA said that the Committee was concerned to have information on budgetary resources for education. For example, he would like to know whether the Autonomous Communities were responsible for raising and allocating funds or whether the latter were allotted by the State.

17. Ms. KHATTAB asked how, given the Autonomous Communities' competence in educational matters, basic uniformity was ensured with regard to curricula and, at the same time, how the latter responded to the various regions' respective social and cultural features - for example, measures to cater for Roma children. She would also like to have details on how revenue was raised and funds allocated for health and education.

18. Ms. SÁNCHEZ RUIZ (Spain) said that children of immigrants and other foreigners were able to attend special integration classes as well as regular schooling.

19. Ms. MOLINA (Spain) said that curriculum content was dealt with by the Commission on Education, a standing body that met two or three times a year, in which the Autonomous Communities participated. There were also a number of other technical commissions, whose work was coordinated through the State School Council. The latter was attended by representatives of the Autonomous Communities and local levels, parents, teachers, trade unions and employers, and was chaired by a ministerial appointee. In addition, the 17 Autonomous Communities monitored the application of legislation to ensure conformity of standards.

20. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said that funding for education had been on the increase in recent years and public education was now free for all children between the ages of 6 and 17 years, with funding for pre-school education from the age of 3 years. Education was a priority item in the State budget, accounting for 5 per cent of Spain's GDP; the sharp rise in the latter in recent years meant that spending on education was constantly growing. The number of school pupils had fallen by 16.5 per cent in the last 10 years, while education spending and the number of teachers had both expanded in almost the same proportions. Public expenditure on education had never been higher and the average teacher-student ratio was 1:13.

21. The State education budget was distributed among the Autonomous Communities in accordance with a number of macroeconomic indicators set by the Ministry of Finance. She did not have first-hand information on the difficulties faced by the Autonomous Communities with regard to education, but it could be assumed they were meeting their targets since they did not request additional funding.

22. In reply to a question from the Chairperson, she said the State did not earmark funds for specific areas of expenditure within individual Autonomous Communities, but rather specified the share of State revenue that would be allocated to each Community, in accordance with the macroeconomic indicators previously mentioned.

23. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said that, in addition to the State allocation, the Autonomous Communities could also levy certain taxes at either the Community or the local level. They then set their own priorities in their Parliaments on the basis of the resulting total revenue, subject to compliance with the requirements established under the basic State legislation on each specific area of expenditure. Central funds were also available for specific projects to meet special needs - recent examples included services for deprived families, single-parent families and victims of child abuse - provided the Autonomous Communities contributed matching amounts.

24. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were supported with the help of European Union funds, depending on the number of members, the geographical extent of their activities and the results of their programmes; in addition, the tax system encouraged the general population to contribute a percentage of its income to NGO support.

25. Mr. CITARELLA asked what steps were being taken to promote the Convention as a legally-binding instrument for use by the judiciary in dealing with children.

26. He wondered how the large numbers of unaccompanied child migrants - whether legal or illegal - were dealt with in the country in general and in Ceuta and Melilla in particular. In Melilla, for example, it appeared that the authorities were refusing to treat Moroccan children entering the territory as children and were sending them back to Morocco, which in turn was denying them re-entry. According to Spanish law, any child discovered to have entered the country illegally must be sent to one of the Autonomous Communities to be dealt with and he therefore wondered what the status of Melilla and Ceuta was, since they appeared to be taking a different approach.

27. He also understood that children seeking asylum were obliged to wait a considerable time to be granted refugee status.

28. He noted that school dropout rates were high among the Roma in Spain, as in many other European countries, and that, like Moroccans, they were subject to discrimination, particularly in the south of the country.

29. The new anti-terrorism legislation was presenting problems in the area of juvenile justice, since the special rules it established applied to children as well as adults: children charged under that legislation were dealt with not by juvenile courts but by a central court in Madrid; they were subject to harsher penalties than children charged with similar offences under other legislation; no review of the sentence was possible until half the term had been served; and they were deprived of their civil rights for a period. Had the State party considered reviewing that legislation in order to safeguard children's rights?

30. Ms. KHATTAB said there was a wide gap between men and women in terms of illiteracy and unemployment rates. She wondered why unemployment was so much higher among women: did women simply prefer to stay at home or were they less qualified? There was also a disturbingly high rate of female-headed households and she wondered what was being done to assist women in that position.

31. Domestic violence was a problem that affected all countries regardless of their level of development. Was it prevalent in certain sectors in Spain and were measures being taken to promote awareness of the problem?

32. She wondered whether any measures had been taken to curb demand for drugs, particularly synthetic drugs, following the 1998 special session of the United Nations General Assembly on drugs, and whether Spain had been active in Mediterranean area initiatives to combat adolescents' use of drugs.

33. Was anything being done, for example through education, to prevent clandestine female genital mutilation in girls of sub-Saharan origin?

34. With regard to the recent special session of the General Assembly on the follow up of the World Summit for Children, she asked whether there were plans to continue the excellent international cooperation activities Spain had been involved in since the 1990 World Summit for Children, and in particular to promote the Convention and a culture of respect for the rights of the child in the Mediterranean area.

35. Guidelines needed to be set concerning children entering Melilla and Ceuta. Did the Government plan to enter into negotiations with the Government of Morocco on that subject?

36. Mr. AL-SHEDDI asked what progress had been made in amending article 154 of the Civil Code, in accordance with the Committee's recommendation in respect of Spain's initial report (CRC/C/15/Add.28, para. 18). He also wondered what was being done to raise awareness within families of the impact of corporal punishment on children, and concerning bullying in schools.

37. He understood that procedures on separation of children from their parents varied from area to area of the country and that some were not in the best interests of the child. He wondered how such procedures were monitored at the national level.

38. Ms. SARDENBERG said the process of decentralization in Spain had been dynamic and very rapid. Development had been unequal, however, in the various Autonomous Communities and she was concerned at the possibility that implementation of the Convention might also be unequal. Was the State authorized to intervene in order to minimize such differences?

39. Referring to the Committee's 1994 concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.28), she said the issue of migrant children, particularly those coming from Morocco, was not new. She would like to know what concrete steps had been taken to deal with the problem in view of the obvious tensions it caused in many parts of the country. Did Spain plan to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families?

40. Noting the adoption of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, she asked for information on remaining pockets of poverty. She was particularly concerned about the situation of the poorest children in what was, after all, a rich developed country.

41. There was a large juvenile population among the 650,000 Roma in Spain and she wondered what steps might have been taken recently to make additional provision for those children.

42. Much progress had been achieved in the area of intercountry adoptions since ratification of the Hague Convention. It appeared that foreign children still experienced problems, however, in particular those from Ecuador, and she would welcome some information on that question.

43. Lastly, she asked whether any work had been done to eliminate gender stereotyping in school textbooks.

44. Ms. AL-THANI said there were no figures on health services in the Autonomous Communities. She would like to be able to compare infant and maternal mortality rates in the different Communities.

45. Reports indicated that health provision varied in qualitative and quantitative terms from area to area, despite the stipulation in the 1986 General Health Act that such inequalities should be eliminated. She would welcome information on the subject, particularly on access to and quality of health care.

46. She wondered what provision was made for sex education for adolescents. There was a health risk among 15 to 19-year-olds who did not use contraceptives, became pregnant and subsequently sought an abortion.

47. She commended the Plan of Action for Disabled Persons 1997-2002, which appeared very comprehensive, particularly in terms of provision for children. She would like to know whether it was implemented by national or regional authorities and how it was implemented in the Autonomous Communities. Once again, according to information received, provision was uneven, and she wondered how equal implementation was guaranteed.

48. Ms. KARP asked whether, in areas such as juvenile justice and child abuse, it was possible for disparities between Autonomous Communities to arise with regard to the resources allocated for implementation of legislation and the standards set for bodies such as the judiciary.

49. She expressed concern that there were not enough juvenile courts in Spain. The existing juvenile courts had a heavy workload and court action was often delayed. The State party should indicate whether any measures had been adopted to improve the situation.

50. It would be interesting to know whether the Government had taken any steps to negotiate an agreement with the Government of Morocco to address the problem of unaccompanied children entering the Spanish enclave of Melilla. It was futile to send such children home if they would immediately return to Melilla. Further information should be provided about the role of the Ombudsman responsible for children's affairs. She would also appreciate details of the steps that were being taken to provide education for all Roma children. Were their cultural specificities taken into account? It would be interesting to learn whether the leaders of the Roma community were involved in designing programmes for their children.

51. The CHAIRPERSON expressed concern that although the State party's legislation on juvenile justice was commendable, it did not have sufficient financial resources to implement it by creating educational and rehabilitative services for children as an alternative to imprisonment. The State should indicate whether it was satisfied that the number of reported cases of child abuse reflected the real situation. It was unclear whether professionals working with children had an obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse. More information should also be provided about the effectiveness of the mechanisms that had been designed to protect children from abuse.

The meeting was suspended at 4.35 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.

52. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said that the Convention was incorporated in domestic law. The Constitutional Court had, on various occasions, directly applied the provisions of the Convention. A significant number of activities had been undertaken with the cooperation of NGOs and local and autonomous authorities to raise awareness of the principles and provisions

of the Convention. Training sessions had been organized for health, education and justice professionals to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention and also to teach them how to put those provisions into practice. Special efforts had been made to raise children's awareness of their rights. The Government would continue its work in that field.

53. Ms. KARP said the State party should provide further information about measures taken to put the provisions of the Convention into practice. Had professionals working with children been provided with specific guidelines?

54. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether judges had been provided with a manual to instruct them on how to implement the Convention.

55. Mr. MARINA HERNANDO (Spain) said that all legal professionals dealing with minors were familiar with the Convention. The General Council of the Judiciary ensured that such professionals received continuous training on the Convention and issues related to child protection. Most cases involving juveniles were heard in the first instance by family judges who were specialists in the protection of children and the family. If the case was later referred to the Supreme Court, the judges of that court had access to specialist advice.

56. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said that a special police corps had been trained to work with children. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was providing financial and technical support to the Autonomous University of Madrid, the Community of Madrid and the Spanish Committee for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the development of a master's course in the needs and rights of the child, based on the principles of the Convention. Many professionals, including representatives of the Government and local councils, had registered for the course.

57. Since the Committee's consideration of Spain's initial report (CRC/C/8/Add.6) in 1994, there had been a significant increase in the number of unaccompanied foreign minors in Spain. Efforts had been made throughout the country to ensure that all children, regardless of their situation, were guaranteed access to basic health and education. The problem of unaccompanied foreign minors was particularly acute in Melilla, where the number of unaccompanied Moroccan children was increasing at an alarming rate of approximately 60 per cent every year. The Government was finding it extremely difficult to control the situation, which was highly complex, partly because of the geographical situation and limited territorial area of Melilla. There were five protection centres in the city which could provide accommodation for unaccompanied children, but space was limited and there were severe staff shortages. Unfortunately, some of the minors living in the centres rejected Spanish values and had shown signs of aggression towards other children. Unaccompanied Moroccan children often went to Melilla in search of work, without realizing that minors under the age of 16 were not allowed to work in Spain.

58. The CHAIRPERSON said that the State party should indicate whether any steps had been taken to act on the recommendation contained the Committee's concluding observations concerning its initial report (CRC/C/15/Add.28). The Committee had recommended that the Government should take all the necessary measures to guarantee that refugee children, children who were asylum-seekers and unaccompanied children enjoyed the rights recognized by the

Convention. Solving the problem of unaccompanied minors in Melilla was the responsibility of the Government in Madrid; the authorities in Melilla should not be left to deal with the problem alone.

59. Ms. KARP said that the Government should endeavour to work in cooperation with the social services in Morocco, to ensure that unaccompanied minors received appropriate care after they were expelled from Spain.

60. Mr. CITARELLA expressed concern that such children often encountered problems with the authorities when returning to Morocco because they could not prove that they were Moroccan nationals.

61. Ms. SARDENBERG said she had read alarming reports of police brutality against such children, both in Morocco and Spain. She asked whether any measures had been adopted to prevent the ill-treatment of such children by the Spanish police.

62. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said the Government had tried to resolve the problem through dialogue with the Government of Morocco. The aim was to encourage as many children as possible to return to their families. It continued to fund a number of programmes organized by NGOs in conjunction with the Red Cross to help minors in Morocco; for example, efforts had been made to provide Moroccan children with training opportunities in their family environment. Unfortunately, given the magnitude of the problem, not much progress had been made. Minors who went to Melilla saw the city as a stepping stone to Europe and often did not wish to return to their families. Efforts to find foster families of North African origin living in Spain to take care of the children had been unsuccessful.

63. In reply to a question by Ms. Khattab, she said that unaccompanied foreign minors did not fall within the scope of Spain's immigration policy. Spain had an obligation under the Convention to ensure that minors did not enter the labour market and to encourage unaccompanied minors to return to their families. Lastly, in reply to a question on police brutality, she said that mechanisms did exist in Spain to monitor compliance with legislation and with the Convention.

64. Mr. MARINA HERNANDO (Spain) said that it was often difficult to determine whether or not unaccompanied persons were minors. All minors were provided with accommodation. He stressed that unaccompanied minors were never "expelled" from Spain; they were repatriated only if the authorities were certain that the child could be reunited with his or her family and if the welfare of the child was not at risk. It was particularly difficult to repatriate Moroccan children because the level of care provided by the social services in Morocco was not ideal, although some improvements had recently been made to the system. There were no guarantees that a repatriated child would not return to Melilla.

65. Ms. KHATTAB said she was surprised that the problem persisted, given that it had been discussed during the consideration of Spain's initial report in 1994. She failed to understand why the State party could not establish a standing committee with the Government of Morocco to address the root causes of the problem.

66. Mr. PALACIO ESPAÑA (Spain) said that relations between Morocco and Spain were amicable. Although a number of agreements had already been concluded with Morocco to control the flow of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, Spain did not wish to interfere with Morocco's internal affairs and dictate how the situation of unaccompanied minors should be addressed on Moroccan territory, particularly as there was manifest intention on the part of the Government of Morocco to resolve the problem. The Government of Spain cooperated with Morocco on a day-to-day basis and was keen to continue to maintain a dialogue with the authorities.

67. Ms. KHATTAB said that it would not be difficult to set up a mechanism such as a standing committee or a hotline with Morocco to tackle the problem of child migrants and that doing so would not be interfering in Moroccan affairs.

68. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said that the issue was of great concern and that the problem would probably worsen in the future. She therefore welcomed the Committee's remarks and hoped that negotiations between the two States and their child protection services would improve the situation.

69. There were not many single-parent households in Spain. The most recent national census indicated that 7.2 per cent of households consisted of single parents bringing up children under 18 years. As a follow-up to the initial report, a study had shown that 86 per cent of single-parent households were headed by women and that a significant number were at risk of social exclusion. Since 1997, there had been an improvement in the pension situation in the event of the death of either parent, and similar programmes had been introduced in the Autonomous Communities. There had also been an improvement in social assistance schemes generally. The Government had targeted single-parent families in its "Integrated Family Plan", which included special measures to help prevent social exclusion. Another priority area was that of professional intervention where there was a breakdown of relations between a couple. Since 2000, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Autonomous Communities had been co-financing a programme to improve family mediation and orientation services. There were also other communal programmes financed with NGOs to assist families in such circumstances.

70. Another problem was the very low birth rate in Spain. There had been a minor upswing in the rate since 2000, partly as a consequence of the improvement in the economic situation, which in turn was partly due to immigration to Spain. In some hospitals over 20 per cent of births were to foreign citizens.

71. With regard to disabled children, the same mechanisms applied nationally and were implemented on a decentralized basis. Each local area was responsible for implementing a plan based on the national plan and funds were supplied by the central ministries, with some subsidies intended solely for organizations working with disabled children. NGOs were also involved - for example the third largest NGO in Spain in terms of income focused on children with mental disabilities and received considerable public funding. There were about 50,000 children under 16 with disabilities in Spain and only 2 per cent were institutionalized. In 1995-1996, the Government had launched a special campaign to encourage the adoption of children with disabilities by families and to help disabled children find foster homes. Most disabled children lived with families and received assistance from the Government and NGOs.

72. The problem of child labour was of great concern and the latest figures available showed that the Labour Inspectorate had detected 216 illegally-employed minors. An ILO estimate had claimed there were about 20,000 child labourers in the country, which was a very high figure. The Government had queried that figure, which had turned out to be based on estimates made between 1980 and 1989 and therefore inaccurate.

73. Mr. MARINA HERNANDO (Spain), replying to a question about possible differences in the treatment of children in local communities, said that if neglect or abuse was detected the same national law would apply throughout the country. Legal experts, social workers and psychiatrists could be brought in to assess the child's circumstances and propose the appropriate measures. The same procedure applied to all Autonomous Communities. In the case of a child at risk, specialists worked with the family; the authorities did not place the child in care unless the situation was very serious. Provisions existed for foster care arranged through the courts and cases of neglect could be prosecuted. Although specialized courts of first instance did exist, family judges heard most cases because of their expertise in the field. A working group on the ill-treatment of children had recently approved a set of procedures covering the detection of abuse which, inter alia, placed an obligation on all doctors, schoolteachers and other professionals to notify the authorities of cases of child abuse. The procedures were intended to unify the criteria for intervention and help professionals reach appropriate conclusions in the social and legal spheres. As in any State governed by the rule of law, the courts had full discretionary authority to enact decisions.

74. In reply to another question, he said that the Ombudsman acted in response to the concerns of members of the public. If necessary, the Ombudsman could request information from the government agency involved on the action to be taken in a particular case and notify the member of the public of the reply. The Ombudsman could also act automatically in order to obtain information from a government agency. The Ombudsman followed up periodic reports on specific matters concerning children, by visiting administrative departments, making assessments and compiling the appropriate recommendations.

75. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN (Spain) said that, because citizens in Spain were not identified in terms of their ethnic origin, data available on the Roma was based on estimates. There were two strategies in place to assist the Roma population: since 1988 the Government had been financing programmes to improve the quality of life of the Roma community, focusing on school attendance and education and training for Roma women in particular. Certain NGOs had also launched a programme to combat school absenteeism, particularly among girls.

76. Ms. ROBLEDO (Spain), replying to a question on health, said that a national anti-drug programme had been launched for the period 2002-2008. The programme, which had received considerable funding, also covered smoking and alcohol consumption. A national plan was also being formulated to combat smoking and Parliament was currently discussing a bill related to the consumption of alcohol, particularly by adolescents. In addition to national programmes there were also regional programmes to combat drug addiction.

77. Infant mortality had been reduced over the previous decade and was currently below the average for the European Union. With regard to deaths from accidents, the situation was similar to that in other countries. Spain was participating in the European Injury Prevention Programme

and in programmes at regional and local level. Health standards did not vary from area to area - primary health care of the same quality was available to everyone and through it, access to other specialized services. Reproductive health was a matter of concern, with 11,000 live births per year to women under 20 years and a high rate of abortions among the same age group. In addition to national health surveys, periodic reports were also compiled to establish what measures could be taken to reduce the rates. The same applied to the consumption of drugs, tobacco and alcohol among young people. The sexual health of adolescents was also an area of concern and the Government planned to implement appropriate programmes across the country.

78. The CHAIRPERSON said it was unfortunate that the written replies had been available in Spanish only. He invited the delegation to reply in writing to any questions which they had not had the possibility to answer in full.

79. Mr. CITARELLA thanked the delegation for its answers and acknowledged that great progress had been made since Spain's last report. He suggested that the Government should draw up a general, national plan covering all aspects of the Convention to prevent any discrepancies at local level or within the Autonomous Communities.

80. Ms. MOGÍN BARQUÍN thanked the Committee for its suggestions and recommendations, which would be of great assistance. She pointed out that decentralization did not mean inequality; national legislation had to be complied with throughout the country and when the Government noted shortcomings it took steps to remedy the situation. The approach being applied was indeed a holistic approach. Spain had been one of the first European countries to ratify the Convention and her Government believed firmly in the application of the international human rights instruments. There could be no boundaries where respect for children's rights was concerned.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.